

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-09 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMCONSUL UDORN

CDR USSAG NAKHON PHANOM

CINCPAC

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 4929

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, LA

SUBJ: THE LAO SETTLEMENT TWO YEARS LATER: RTG VIEW

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF : A. VIENTIANE 1513 B. STATE 52375 C. PARIS 6911

D. JAKARTA 3330 E. NEW DELHI 3839

SUMMARY: THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTRY GENERALLY AGREES WITH

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EMBASSY VIENTIANE'S ASSESSMENT OF THE LAO SETTLEMENT (REF.A)

BUT IS CONCERNED ABOUT ACCUSATIONS OF THAI INTERFERENCE IN LAOS. THE PGNU HAS NOT FOLLOWED UP ON THE JANUARY 1975 JOINT THAI-LAO COMMITTEE MEETING IN BANGKOK. A MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL BELIEVES THAT THE LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT HAS THE UPPER HAND POLITICALLY AND WILL EVENTUALLY TRIUMPH. THIS OFFICIAL DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT A COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT IN LAOS WOULD BE A SERIOUS THREAT TO THAI NATIONAL SECURITY. END SUMMARY

1. AN EMBASSY OFFICER DISCUSSED REF A WITH A MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR RTG POLICY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. THE MFA OFFICIAL SAID THE RTG FOLLOWS THE SITUATION IN LAOS CLOSELY AND GENERALLY AGREES WITH EMBASSY VIENTIANE'S ASSESSMENT. HE ADDED THAT THE RTG IS CURRENTLY CONCERNED ABOUT LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT CHARGES THAT THE RTG IS PROMOTING A RIGHTIST COUP AND INTERFERING MILITARILY IN LAOS: "EVERY TIME THE LAO RIGHTISTS MEET, THE LPF ACCUSES US OF PLOTTING A COUP." HE CONFIRMED THAT THE PGNU HAD OFFICIALLY PROTESTED TO THE THAI AMBASSADOR IN VIENTIANE ABOUT ALLEGED RTG INTERFERENCE. THE MFA OFFICIAL THINKS THESE MEETINGS REFLECT THE RIGHTISTS' OWN WEAKNESS RATHER THAN AN ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW THE PGNU; HE BELIEVES THE LPF USES THAILAND AS A WHIPPING BOY TO GAIN SUPPORT FROM THE LAO POPULATION, WHICH IS DEEPLY SUSPICIOUS OF THAILAND.

2. THE MFA OFFICIAL SAID THE RTG HAS PRESSED THE PGNU TO SEND A TECHNICAL DELEGATION TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED SOLUTION TO THE TRANSIT PROBLEM WHICH THE TWO GOVERNMENTS DISCUSSED AT THE JANUARY 1975 THAI-LAO COMMITTEE MEETING IN BANGKOK (BANGKOK 1133). HE THEORIZED THAT LPF OPPOSITION TO REMOVING THIS IRRITANT HAS STALLED PGNU FOLLOW-UP ON THESE AGREEMENTS. NOR HAS THERE BEEN ANY PROGRESS ON OTHER PROBLEMS, SUCH AS BORDER SECURITY, WHICH THE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING DISCUSSED.

3. THE MFA OFFICIAL BELIEVES THE LPF SIDE HAS THE POLITICAL ADVANTAGE SINCE IT IS UNITED AND DEDICATED. IT CAN POINT TO VIENTIANE SIDE CORRUPTION TO GAIN POPULAR FAVOR, WHEREAS THE VIENTIANE SIDE LACKS THE POLITICAL WILL TO IMPROVE ITS CONFIDENTIAL

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IMAGE. THE MFA OFFICIAL THINGS THAT IN THE LONG RUN THE LPF WILL WIN CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY.

4. THE MFA OFFICIAL DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT A COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT IN LAOS WOULD BE A THREAT TO THAILAND, SINCE THE LPF WOULD STILL HAVE TO CONCENTRATE ON WINNING OVER THE LAO PEOPLE. HE SAID THAILAND HAS IN ITS FAVOR NATIONALISM, A HIGH RATE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE ABILITY TO PROTECT

ITS BORDERS (SIC). HE CONTINUED THAT THAILAND'S ABILITY TO RESIST COMMUNISM DEPENDS ON IMPROVING ITS OWN GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE, AND SATISFYING THE NEEDS OF ITS POPULATION. IF IT CAN DO SO, THE MFA OFFICIAL SAID COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS IN LAOS OR CAMBODIA WOULD NOT THREATEN THAILAND'S SECURITY.

5. THE EMBASSY OFFICER EXPRESSED OUR HOPE FOR CONTINUED RTG SUPPORT FOR A STABLE EVOLUTION OF THE PGNU ACCORDING TO THE VIENTIANE AGREEMENT. THE MFA OFFICIAL REPLIED THAT THE RTG WILL CONTINUE ITS SUPPORT, BUT NOTED THAT THE RTG HAS LITTLE ABILITY TO INFLUENCE EVENTS IN LAOS.

6. COMMENT: THE ABOVE OBSERVATIONS MAY REFLECT A CURRENT THAI FEELING OF IMPOTENCE WITH REGARD TO EVENTS IN INDO-CHINA BECAUSE OF THE DISQUIETING EFFECTS OF THE UNFOLDING DEBACLE TO THE EAST OF HERE. WE BELIEVE ALSO THAT THIS PARTICULAR THAI OBSERVER MAY SEE IN THE VIENTIANE SIDE MANY OF THE SAME CHARACTERISTICS THAT HE DEPLORES IN HIS OWN SOCIETY, AND SENSES THAT THE LPF WILL EVENTUALLY DOMINATE LAOS THROUGH POLITICAL ATTRITION THAT MAY NOT ACTUALLY VIOLATE THE ACCORDS. WE FIND TOO SANGUINE HIS COMMENT ON THE RTG ABILITY TO DEFEND ITSELF AND MEET ITS PEOPLE'S ASPIRATIONS. WHILE THE RTG HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DO THESE THINGS, CHANCES ARE THAT GREED, MYOPIA, AND POLITICAL INFIGHTING WILL LIMIT THE REALIZATION OF THAT POTENTIAL.
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